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NAMRU-SA Researcher Serves as Official USA Archery Judge at Valor Games Southwest

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Duane Cox (front, left), electronics technician at the Naval Medical Research Unit- San Antonio (NAMRU-SA) serves as the official USA Archery Judge for the Valor Games Southwest archery competition. As the archery judge, Cox checked the line of archers for safety and equipment issues, and encouraged participants like Rutha Burns (front, right), a disabled veteran, as she participated in her first Valor Games and first archery competition. (Photo courtesy of NAMRU-SA Public Affairs)

SAN ANTONIO – An electronics technician at the Naval Medical Research Unit – San Antonio (NAMRU-SA) served as the official USA Archery Judge for the Valor Games Southwest, San Antonio, Texas, September 25 – 27. Through the power of sport, competition, and camaraderie, the Valor Games provides an opportunity for disabled veterans and active duty service members to challenge their personal limits in a spirited competition in seven sports, including archery. San Antonio Sports hosted the event, for the fifth consecutive year, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; U.S. Paralympics, a division of the United States Olympic Committee; and community and corporate partners.

“Archery is an individual sport, but in the Valor Games service members build strength and confidence in their ability with the bow while experiencing genuine military camaraderie,” said Duane Cox, electronics technician, NAMRU-SA.

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The Valor Games Southwest is a multi-sport event with the goal to provide an adaptive sports competition opportunity to veterans and active duty service members to overcome a variety of disabilities. Archery, one of seven adaptive sports competitions held during the Valor Games, requires no previous experience or specific skill set to participate.

“Regardless of your age, gender, or disability, anyone can learn archery,” said Jeremy Velez, head coach for the Warrior Transition Battalion (WTB) Adaptive Archery Program, Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Velez is also head coach for the Texas Regional Paralympic Sports Adaptive Archery Program for Veterans.

Cox and Velez were proud to have seven members from their Adaptive Archery Program win medals including gold and silver at this year’s games.

As a member of the biomedical engineering research team at NAMRU-SA, Cox brings dedication and expertise to his projects. Cox applied that same commitment to archery to achieve the USA Archery Level 3 Coach, certified judge and is also a competitive archer. Within the past three years he seized every opportunity for training to reach the judge level, and his expertise as an archery judge placed him right in the middle of the Valor Games Southwest.

As the official USA Archery Judge, Cox wore the red judges’ shirt and performed the official duties of checking equipment to make sure everything was within regulations, maintained the line for safety, distance, and conducted arrow calls.

“The first time I picked-up a bow, I was hooked,” said, Pfc. Lauren Jahn, a U.S. Army service member in the WTB and gold medal winner in the Intermediate Recurve Division. Jahn embraced archery four months ago and after much practice and coaching, now shoots at a competitive level and just won her first gold medal.

“Coach Duane [sic] and Coach Jeremy [sic] really helped me in practice four times a week,” said Jahn. “Archery is so peaceful while still challenging.”

According to Cox, statements like Jahn’s are usually said by those who take up archery. “As you concentrate on the target your mind is freed from everyday distractions, by focusing,” said Cox.

After a friend introduced Cox to the WTB, he decided to become a volunteer coach with the Adaptive Archery Program. “WTB has a great program -- I enjoy working with the warriors and teaching them a new sport, no matter what their ability and they are all able to perform the sport at a competitive level. It’s been very rewarding,” said Cox.

Cox was introduced to archery three years ago when his daughter became interested in the sport. “By helping my daughter learn the sport my passion for archery grew and I just love the sport”, said Cox.

Cox now runs a non-profit Junior Olympic Archery Development (JOAD) club in La Vernia, Texas, with a roster of 30 students. The non-profit teaches archery to people of all ages for a variety of archery styles and venues. JOAD provides all the equipment, set up, and instructions at no charge.

When young people come out to the archery program, he encourages their parents to come out with them and pick up a bow.

“When you’re out there together doing an activity everyone can enjoy can really bring a family together,” said Cox. He continued, “I see families bond over archery because it gives a common

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interest and goals. Archery requires a lot of practice and dedication, when you are doing it with friends and family it gives the experience more meaning and enjoyment.”

“We do it for the love of the sport,” Cox said with a smile.

NAMRU-SA is located on the San Antonio Military Medical Center campus, Joint Base Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and conducts medical, craniofacial, biomedical, and directed energy research, which focuses on ways to enhance the health, safety, performance, and operational readiness of Navy and Marine Corps personnel and addresses their emergent medical and oral/facial problems in routine and combat operations.

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